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[For additional information on personality traits see category 159.]

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but it was undeniably different. At that time the family was not particularly large: Lim Chieng-cua was not yet married and his elder brother wasn't living at home. Speculative neighbors might have expected the Lims to build the usual bottom wing of the U, adding a new wing, if their prosperity continued, when Lim Chieng-cua married. Instead, the Lims built a truly large house, a house that is still the largest in Peihotien. Due to the unusual individuality that has given the Lims a reputation for wisdom and leadership—a habit of seeing as important the same things as their neighbors but not feeling required to follow the conventional paths to their goals—Lim Chieng-cua and his father departed slightly from the usual practice. Rather than building a U-shaped house, they built their house in the form of a hollow square, leaving a small open courtyard in the center. The front of the square, however, deviated in no way from the conventional base for a U-shaped structure, even to the doorways for expansion at each end. They surrounded the house and the drying ground in front with a dignified brick wall, a useful addition in the city, but one rarely found in the northern villages now that bandit attacks are no longer feared. They also built a long, handsome brick pig pen, a final touch which both amused and awed their neighbors.

The Lims' guest hall is quite a large room, as it would have to be to retain proper proportions with the rest of the house. It is floored with lovely terrazzo, neatly and soberly. The floor is swept more often than in the other rooms and mopped every week or so. Puddles left by diaperless children are cleaned up fairly quickly, and concerted effort keeps the chickens and ducks from seeking shelter there. When we first moved into the house, there was no ceiling in the guest hall. The whitewashed walls stretched up to heavy beams richly darkened by years of incense smoke. Unfortunately, in his restless desire to improve and change, Lim Chieng-cua added a ceiling to the room. His neighbors consider it attractive, but I missed the stark dignity of those beams.

The Lims' guest hall is simply furnished, far more simply than their income requires. The prosperous families of Peihotien buy heavy, overstuffed chairs covered in plastic. In summer they are a torment to sit on for more than a few minutes, and in winter they smell musty and develop miniature landscapes of mold. The Lims, whether from modesty or from a more developed sense of comfort, retain the old rattan chairs that are comfortable year around. The family altar is another matter. Modesty here would not be a virtue: a

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We can thus be certain that Lim Hue-lieng was spoiled as a child. All Taiwanese boys are indulged and pampered for their first six or seven years, and first-born sons often enjoy special treatment even longer. Married to the stern, ambitious Lim Han-ci, Hue-lieng's mother probably had neither the time nor the permission to spoil him as much as other mothers might, but grandmothers need ask no permission—even from sons like Lim Han-ci. A man's children belong to his own parents before they belong to him. Parents do not come into full rights over their children until their own parents die. Like every child fortunate enough to be born while his grandparents are still alive, Lim Hue-lieng spent much time in their company. His grandfather probably told him stories, took him to the store for treats, gave him affection openly and without the reservations necessary for maintaining authority; his grandmother protected him from parental discipline, saved food for him from the table, and shared her bed with him. If Lim Han-ci resented this indulgence of his son and thought it unwise, the unfortunate consequences of the situation did not teach him restraint and wisdom with respect to his own grandchildren, whom he spent much of his time spoiling in the last years of his own life.

Like all members of the Lim family, Lim Hue-lieng grew up into a strong, willful personality; he had in greater measure than most the family's fierce temper and their independence. As a child he feared his father's punishment; as a youth, he resented it; as a young man, he looked outside his home and found that there he too could be respected, feared, and obeyed. He and his father were soon in conflict over his outside activities. The more his father attempted to restrain him, the more satisfying Lim Hue-lieng found life outside his family. He became a leader among the young men in Peihotien, and before long was recognized as a leader by the young men of the whole Hotien area. His name was being mentioned by people who had never heard of the village of Peihotien. At the age of nineteen, Lim Hue-lieng left the family home and severed his relations with his father.

To the Westerner accustomed to adolescent revolt and the approval of independence in young men, this may seem like an entirely reasonable and justifiable action. In the social context of Peihotien in the 1930's, it was an act of extreme moral violence. A Chinese son's first duty is to obey, respect, and support his father. Children exist for the sake of their parents. When a Chinese son dies before his father

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and thus is unable to take care of him in his old age, the father is expected to ritually beat the coffin at the funeral, "to punish the child for being so unfilial as to leave his father alone in his old age." One can imagine what the reaction of a man such as Lim Han-ci must have been to this open and public revolt on the part of his son. His neighbors condemned the boy as unfilial, but for Lim Han-ci this held little solace. It only increased his humiliation. Rather than accepting the exoneration of his neighbors, he recognized his failure for what it was. With his remaining children he struggled, with some success, to soften the harshness of his character.

The very fact that Lim Hue-lieng dared to defy his father and set out on his own is evidence of a confident, stubborn personality. He had no money to buy land and establish himself as a farmer, and what few jobs were available in factories and shops usually went to the relatives of the proprietors. Lim Hue-lieng was able to assert his independence without economic disaster because of the unusual qualities of leadership he possessed and the position he was building for himself in the *lo mua*. The *lo mua* is a purely Chinese institution for which it is difficult to find a Western parallel. I am tempted to call it an organization of gangsters because of its methods, but since many of its goals are to uphold the traditional morals of the society, the parallel is specious. The *lo mua* contribute heavily to the repair of temples and to the expenses of religious festivals. They have been known to severely punish outsiders who, from ignorance or poor judgement, suggest lewd activities to respectable women of their area. They frequently protect the down-trodden for no charge, and just as frequently force their protection on the wealthy at near ruinous prices. A business man on bad terms with the *lo mua* may find his shop robbed weekly while his neighbor who is more careful in his relationships hardly need lock his doors at night.

The details of Lim Hue-lieng's career between the time he left his father's home and his reappearance there in his late twenties are known only by way of gossip and hearsay. Probably no one knows all the steps in his career, but by the time he was twenty-five, he had established his leadership over all the *lo mua* in a large section of the Taipei basin, and his influence was felt in the Taipei market place, reputedly the center of *lo mua* activity. I know that he had been jailed a few times, but was always promptly released; that he had been in hiding several times, whether from the police or from rivals I am not

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*159 former village beauty, but Gioq-ki is of another type. She resembles
142 far more her half-brother A-bok and her uncle Lim Chieng-cua than her short, stocky mother. From her father's family she inherited the unusual long, thin face with its high cheekbones, narrow nose, and
*159 firm, somewhat pointed chin. She also inherited, or imbibed, that fam-
● 159 ily's hot temper and fierce character. In Lim Hue-lieng, his brother, and his father, these traits were awesome and even admired; in a Taiwanese female, they are labelled insolence. Gioq-ki is better educated than most village women and though overly proud of her education, she makes no use of it. She is clearly intelligent, but her quick mind only intensifies her restlessness and her dissatisfaction.

It is not difficult to see why Gioq-ki was attracted to the newspaper reporter who grew up on the mainland of China. Chang Jong-kuei is handsome, assured, and sophisticated. His carefully tailored, imported business suits look out of place on village paths, but he shows no signs of self-consciousness. Although the expression on his face suggests affability, his only contact with his village neighbors is at the gambling tables. When Gioq-ki met him, her experience with sophistication was limited to the practiced posing of young village toughs. While bold in a fight and defiant of their enemies, these young men withered at a glance from her father. They speak with confidence and respond quickly to any insult, and yet they are cautious of public opinion in their villages and accept the dictates of local custom. Chang Jong-kuei knows nothing of these restraints. He is an educated mainlander, a city dweller without obligation. Gioq-ki saw him move with ease and assurance through expensive hotels and restaurants in which her father would have looked out of place and slightly uncomfortable. Her father and the *lo mua* feared no one but deferred to the community; Chang Jong-kuei knew no community. The average villager would not trust Chang simply because he is not subject to the usual social pressures, but to Gioq-ki, living in the glow of her father's reputation for independence and power, Chang Jong-kuei's freedom from restraint looked like a personal quality.

*159 At the time Gioq-ki and Chang met, young people in the villages
*593 were just beginning to demand the right to choose their own marriage
178 partners. The objections of Gioq-ki's parents to her choice were balanced by her contemporaries' admiration of her boldness. What doubts
582 she herself may have had about marrying a rootless mainlander were
584 cancelled by her fiance's confidence and his dangerously foolish belief in her father's inability to interfere.

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instead of turning to the dubious activities of the *lo mua*, they are violent only in defending the good name of their district and chastising in dark alleys any luckless mainland soldiers who force their attentions on "good" Taiwanese girls. Currently, their main activity seems to center on finding places to dance and people to dance with, an illegal activity during this period. Masa is much sought after as a dancing teacher and is reputed to be "the best." He is a romantically handsome boy with a surprising wave in his thick hair, but he does not look like a Lim. He has the charm, the temper, and the leadership potential typical of the rest of the Lims, but he is the only child of Lim Hue-lieng who has no physical resemblance to him. He has instead the short, square, powerful body of his mother, a rounder face and the broad Taiwanese nose.

I neglected to ask the family why he was known by a Japanese nickname, but regardless of the reason the name is appropriate. The image of Japan held by the younger people in the village is a composite of Japanese popular songs, colorful Japanese movies, and soft drink advertisements picturing pretty Japanese girls with friendly smiles. Masa is one of many village boys who cherish this image as an alternative to the life they know in Peihotien. As the men of his grandfather's generation chaffed under the restrictions of a Japanese colonial government and longed for the return of a Chinese administration that they could not remember, so the young men of today look upon a past they were too young to know, as a time of freedom and plenty. They read the second rate Japanese novels that are banned on Taiwan, and wear with excessive arrogance the humble Japanese *zori* that the Chinese government foolishly attempted to ban (and has since started manufacturing themselves). Nearly all of these young people have stop-gap jobs of one sort or another which bring them a little spending money but nothing that suggests a beginning in adult life. They simply wait, passing the time as pleasantly as they can. Masa and several others his age participate in the village band that marches in all religious processions, but the religion itself they scorn. Few Taiwanese take religion with the earnest seriousness that Westerners demand, but the young men of Masa's group (and that does not include all the young people of the village) laugh at the shamans, regard the priests in the temples as cynical men who have found a soft job, and ancestor worship as a tradition that must be carried on only for the pleasure it gives the old people in the family.

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#159 between] came to talk about a marriage when I was nineteen, but I
+593 said I didn't want to get married. I still didn't want to get married
599 when I was twenty-three, but my parents made me do it. It was all
584 because of my parents. I knew about this family and I didn't want to marry into it. It is better the way they do it now—it is better to pick out your husband yourself because then you can get along together. See how it is with me. I didn't want this marriage and I was right. We don't get along at all. He is always going *peng, peng, peng* [the sound used to denote scolding]. There is nothing good about an arranged marriage. The very most you can do is visit your parents now and then and say, 'I didn't want to marry him and you made me do it so now you are responsible for my suffering.' But when I was married, all of the marriages were arranged by the parents. And that is the stupidest thing in the world.

"I was only 19 when they came to talk about this marriage. I wouldn't do it, and my grandmother wouldn't make me do it. She didn't like the things she heard about the Lims either. But three years later my mother and her husband's elder brother's wife went ahead and arranged this marriage. Every time I go home, I complain to them that they gave me a sad, hard life."

+159 I pointed out to Chui-ieng that I often see her sitting with her
+596 husband whispering to him about various things and she answered
+593 indignantly, "Oh you. You are so dumb. He beats me all the time because we get along so well, is that why? You don't know how hard I had to work when I first married into this family. I even had to go out and work in the fields with the rest of them. And all the time he is scolding . . ."

[124] My assistant, whose honesty at times overwhelms her diplomacy, suggested, "Well, he only hits you when something happens. He doesn't hit you just to amuse himself."

Chui-ieng could not deny the truth of this but asserted, "Yes, but I'll always remember it. I'll never forget it until I die. I'll always remember to bring it up and talk about it once in awhile."

Lim Chieng-cua and Chui-ieng have four boys and two girls. Their first born, Kim-hok, is a tall, handsome boy in his early teens.
[142] He has the long-boned body and the fine, thin features of his father's family. He also has their temperament and in him I fear it will be a
+159 handicap that it was not to the generations before him. Their strength
+596 and self-confidence show up in Kim-hok as stubborn arrogance. The
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smallest slight by one of his peers, intentional or accidental, demands a disproportionate retaliation. His temper is as violent as that of his father and grandfather, but unlike them his reason does not always return when it cools. He holds grudges far longer than most children his age. Old Lim Han-ci was in his last years when Kim-hok was born and he catered to the child's whims in a way that amazed his son and perplexed his two older grandchildren. With Lim A-pou's two children he had been only a little more lenient than he had with his own children, but when his second son presented him with a grandson he seemed to forget the lessons he had learned—he gave Kim-hok all the grandfatherly indulgence and protection from discipline that had cost him so much with his own eldest son, Lim Hue-lieng. If he had lived a few years longer, perhaps he might have used his influence over the boy to help Chieng-cua redirect his son's explosive nature into more creditable behavior. But, he died too soon, leaving Kim-hok with the imprint of his indulgence but not of his training.

If Chieng-cua were married to a woman with a quiet, gentle personality, such as his mother had, he could by the strength of his own character pass on much of his father's training. Instead he is married to a strong-minded woman who is constantly at war with him. Their children have become her weapons. This is not an uncommon state of affairs in a Chinese household. When a woman enters her husband's house, she comes as a stranger without friends or relatives. She has no status in that family until she bears a son, but even then the comfort of her declining years is not assured unless she can bind that son to her with the ties of gratitude and affection. Chinese society demands of a young man that he care for his aged father—if he does not he is an outcast in his home district and under suspicion everywhere else. The dictum also includes his aged mother, but women matter less in China. The social pressure in her behalf is not as great. To establish her claim, a Chinese mother depends not upon the sanctions of society, but on the ties she herself can create, the ties of emotion buried so deeply in the mind as to be ineradicable. The Taiwanese believe that after a boy reaches six or seven years of age, his father must withdraw and treat him sternly and without affection in order to maintain authority, respect, and obedience. If a woman's relations with her husband are not good, she can make excellent use of her husband's aloofness to increase her children's resentment of him and strengthen their ties to her. Even if she bears her husband no

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malice, she makes use of his cold sternness to protect her own future; she attempts to preserve her children's respect for their father, but she reserves their affection for herself.

Lim Chui-ieng is full of malice toward her husband and she uses every means available to her to both undermine her husband's authority and his children's respect for him. She allows Kim-hok to do as he pleases and even plots with him ways of getting around orders his father has issued to him. Except for frowns of disapproval and an occasional formal beating, Lim Chieng-cua has no tools left to him in training his son. Chui-ieng's scorn for the other members of the family has been conveyed to her children without hindrance. Masa, who is only five or six years older than Kim-hok, has always teased him and ordered him about, enforcing his orders with his superior strength. Had Masa's father been the head of the family rather than Kim-hok's, the younger boy might have borne his subjection more easily. Instead he developed an intense hatred for Masa that reached its peak one night when Kim-hok was nine or ten years old. Lim A-pou walked into her son's bedroom and found Kim-hok about to bury a knife in Masa's sleeping form. Even Kim-hok's mother was horrified by this incident.

Le-cu, a girl, was born when Kim-hok was about two years old. She is approaching adolescence now but without the clumsy self-consciousness of American children. She runs with the grace of a forest animal and all of her movements, intense where her mother's are simply tense, are a joy to watch. She is quick to anger but within an hour she may be joking with the person at whom she was raging. Her mother allows her a freedom of expression that plainly shocks other village mothers. Neighbors who have girls her age regret their daughters' friendship with Le-cu because they fear she will lead them into unsuitable activities. Her peers consider her "fearless." She hates school and argues constantly with her mother about quitting. Most girls her age are burdened with the care of their younger siblings, making school a welcome respite, but Le-cu manages to avoid most responsibilities. I frequently saw her playing with her younger brothers and sisters and helping them, but more because it amused her than because it was expected of her. They bring to her their broken toys and bruised knees rather than going to their impatient mother.

Thiam-hok, Lim Chieng-cua's third child and second son, is an unusual Lim. He is quiet, slight of build, and slow to anger. He is immensely popular and is included in whatever game is being played,

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but he rarely takes the lead and never seems to expect it. He is content to think up new variations on old games and let the others carry them out. Thiam-hok often sits alone daydreaming or perhaps thinking. I have seen this kind of behavior in other village children, children suffering from the debilitation of frequent illness and inadequate diet, but with Thiam-hok one senses activity behind his withdrawn face. Several times I have come upon him hiding in a quiet corner, hunched over a piece of paper. Before he could conceal it, I saw that he was sketching with a stubby pencil and sketching with a certain amount of talent. My sincere praise did nothing to lessen his embarrassment—I had stumbled into what he evidently considered a secret, sinful pleasure. I later heard his siblings and even his mother teasing him about his pictures, but he did not abandon the activity. He only became more circumspect. To the initial amusement of his parents, he announced at the age of eight that he would no longer eat any form of meat, including vegetables fried in pig fat, a Taiwanese family's most common source of animal protein. He wished to live the life of a Buddhist. Lim Chui-ieng humored him for a few weeks, but when it became clear that he was serious, she forced him to return to normal eating habits for fear of damage to his already delicate constitution. He finally submitted, although he vowed to return to the stern discipline of Buddhism when he was fully grown. In determination he is definitely a Lim, but in him, the family character is taking a curious twist.

Lim Chieng-cua's fourth child and third son is my favorite. Even the most persistent teasing of his elder siblings fails to ruffle Kui-hok's good humor. He has none of Thaim-hok's dreaminess but his face nearly always has a shy smile on it. He was not yet in school when I lived with his family, so I saw a good deal of him. He came to our office nearly every day to collect curly pencil shavings which he distributed to all of his friends. Although he is not beyond the usual teasing of younger siblings, he always gives in when they show signs of tears and leaves if they begin to vent their rage on him. Either his emotions burn with a cooler flame or he has already found a method for controlling them. One day when I was walking along a path I found him energetically slashing the tops off some long grass with a toy wooden sword. I asked conversationally what he was doing and he said, "Cutting off heads." I fumbled linguistically and quite by accident blurted out, "Whose?" He promptly gave me the name of Lim A-

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#159 bok's young son, the tiny family tyrant, smiled, and ran off to join a
#596 nearby ball game. Unlike any of his brothers and sisters, Kui-hok
• 157 openly adores his father. Even the adults are amused by his practice of hoarding any treats that come his way to share with his father. He is shy, particularly with us, but not so shy that he wouldn't occasionally slip his hand into my husband's when they happened to be going in the same direction.

+159 Lim Chui-ieng now uses her older children as substitutes for the
#593 adult friends she has been unable or unwilling to make in the village,
#596 but as infants she did not find the solace in them that many unhappy
842 wives do. After the first two, she was unable to produce sufficient milk and had to rely on powdered milk and local substitutes such as rice gruel and soy milk. She complains of the work they cause her, and she complains of the bad effect her pregnancies have had on her health. After the birth of Kui-hok, Lim Chieng-cua made an extraordinary suggestion for a Chinese husband. He told his wife to have an hysterectomy, the only means of birth control considered reliable at that time by the Taiwanese. Most men, even men considerably poorer than Lim Chieng-cua, are unwilling to limit the size of their families. The number of sons a man has is a great source of pride. An old man told me, "People here don't ask how much money you have. They ask how many sons you have." Perhaps the fact that Lim Chieng-cua had three sons and was seriously concerned about Taiwan's population problems prompted his suggestion to his wife. And perhaps he was looking at the more personal future of his family. If his three sons as adults could not live in harmony under the leadership of the eldest, their share of the family property would be divided in three portions. A three-way division of Lim Chieng-cua's half of the family estate would make small portions and more sons with even smaller shares would land each of them back close to where old Lim Han-ci had begun. Lim Chieng-cua may also have been worried about his wife's health although to me she looked stronger than most of her neighbors. Perhaps he was just tired of her complaints.

Out of fear, Lim Chui-ieng delayed the operation until after the birth of two more children. Lim Chieng-cua remarked to me once that it would have been a great blessing to everyone if she had gone when
#159 he first suggested it. The fifth child, Bieng-cu, is an ugly, sulky little
596 girl. Her habitual expression is one of barely repressed anger. She has
157 not yet the courage to express her feelings in attacks on her peers so

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she resorts to attacks on their possessions, their smaller siblings, or to vicious cursing from a safe distance. She is disliked by most of the village children and finds her only companionship with Tan A-hong's youngest daughter. Chai-ngo is gradually rejecting her as she becomes better acquainted in the village, leaving Bieng-cu to her own devices which consist mainly of tormenting the last born of Lim Chieng-cua's children, Cin-hok. When I left the village, Cin-hok was the four-year-old stereotype of all last-born boys in Chinese families. He acts much younger than his age and takes full advantage of his position. He cries more than any child I have ever known, but his tears can be turned on and off at will. To stop them one need only comply with the demand that started them, and that is exactly what everyone in the family does. What A-bok's young son achieves with insolent charm, Cin-hok gets with long, sullen crying. Both Bieng-cu and Cin-hok are lacking in the family good looks. They resemble neither parent but are square, stocky-looking peasants.

After Cin-hok's birth, Lim Chui-ieng entered a hospital and had an hysterectomy. When she left the hospital she went to her adoptive parents' home and informed them that she never intended to step foot in her husband's house again. I have no idea what plans she had for supporting herself, but after a few weeks her foster brothers told her firmly that she must return to her husband. Even if she believed them far superior to her husband's family, they could not afford to support another man's wife for the rest of her life. Poor Chui-ieng's last attempt to reject her "fate" ran head on into reality. Personally, I question the sincerity of her avowed intention of severing her relations with the Lim family. I am more inclined to believe it was just another attempt to bring trouble and humiliation upon what she considered the unjustifiably proud head of her husband. She returned to him and her children just over a month after her operation.

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chapter 12

[p.141]

A GIFT OF PRIDE

During the years we lived in Peihotien, my husband often turned to Lim Chieng-cua for solutions to the puzzles of village life. We were rarely disappointed by his suggestions. Many of the villagers, and even some of the educated men who are at ease in the classrooms of Taipei, shook their heads at our queries and gave us the thoughtless answer: "That's just the way it is done." Unlike his neighbors, Lim Chieng-cua enjoyed turning our questions over in his mind, often showing us that the error was in the question. We came to rely on his insights to send us down a more fruitful path in our search for understanding. It is not easy for a man who knows no other way of life, and who is a deeply involved participant in the life he knows, to step away from it, and to view it through an outsider's eyes. It is not easy, and it is often not pleasant, but for the Lims this has become a habit. Lim Chieng-cua is not the contemplative oriental so often described and so rarely seen. If he were, he would not have been of so much assistance to us, nor would his opinions have been so respected by his fellows. In the closed life of a Taiwanese village, the unusual quirks of a man's personality are accepted in the same way as a crippled leg: that's just the way he is. But, even the slightest suspicion of a more basic peculiarity—a man who questions the premises his neighbors call fact—leads to doubt and distrust. Because of the long hours he wasted talking with us, some of Lim Chieng-cua's neighbors wondered at his patience, others grew suspicious of his motives and ours, and the